DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 255 HE 001 296

AUTHOR SPURR, STEPHEN H.
TITLE THE RELATIVE ROLES OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING.
INSTITUTION COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON, D.C.
PUB DATE 5 DEC 69
NOTE 7P.; ADDRESS TO THE NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON D.C., DEC 4-6, 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.45
DESCRIPTORS *DECISION MAKING, *FACULTY, *GOVERNANCE, *HIGHER EDUCATION, RESPONSIBILITY, *STUDENT PARTICIPATION, STUDENT ROLE, UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

ABSTRACT

ALTHOUGH STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC DECISION MAKING HAS BECOME GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE, THERE IS STILL CONTROVERSY ABOUT WHO HAS THE ULTIMATE DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY: THE FACULTY OR STUDENTS. HISTORICALLY, UNIVERSITIES BASED ON FACULTY POWER, PREVALENT IN NORTHERN EUROPE AND THE US, HAVE IN GENERAL BEEN GOVERNED BY CONSENSUS METHODS AND HAVE BEEN PRODUCTIVE IN SCHOLARSHIP, WHILE UNIVERSITIES IN WHICH STUDENT INFLUENCE IS STRONG HAVE BECOME HIGHLY POLITICIZED AND HAVE GENERALLY CEASED TO BE ACADEMICALLY DISTINGUISHED. THE US UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN BASED ON THE "GENERATIONAL CONCEPT" IN WHICH THE FACULTY ALONE ARE THE ENFRANCHISED CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS PAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF ATTENDING THE INSTITUTION. STUDENTS ARE OBJECTING TO THAT CONCEPT AND SEE THE UNIVERSITY MORE AS A CITY-STATE IN WHICH THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE CLASS OF CITIZEN, WITH EQUAL RIGHTS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. WHEN THE FACULTY ATTEMPTS TO COMPROMISE ON THESE ISSUES, IT MAY COMPROMISE ON THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE UNIVERSITY IS BASED. DIRECT AND FORMAL STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IS DESIRABLE. BUT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE FACULTY MUST DETERMINE WHAT STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR ARE TO BE REQUIRED OF ALL IN THE INTEREST OF THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY. (AF)

Stephen H. Spurr
University of Michigan

~~Draft~~
~~October 16, 1969~~

(Spurr-1)

ED036255

THE RELATIVE ROLES OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING

No one questions the right of faculty to participate actively in the academic decisions of American colleges and universities. Few, I suspect, question the equal desirability of student participation. Students can bring to academic decisions a freshness of opinion, an undiluted critical appraisal, and an evaluation of the academic institutions from the standpoint of the majority who constitute its chief clients and indeed its only reason for being. Furthermore, there is educational merit in student participation in academic decision-making. Students who participate actively and regularly on university committees find their experience contributing greatly to their maturation.

With increasing recognition of these values and under pressure from the students, universities are beginning to involve students in a wide range of academic deliberations and policy formulation. All of this is to the good.

There remains, however, a real issue yet to be resolved. This is the issue of the relative role of students and faculty in the ultimate decision-making authority within the university. Put baldly, it is the question of faculty power vs student power. This issue is a real one. It cannot be dodged. Increasingly, students dispute the traditional concept of the university as an institution established by the state with authority for most academic decisions delegated by the governing board to the faculty. They argue instead that such authority should be delegated to the students themselves. As peripheral issues are settled on many campuses

HE001296

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

through negotiation and compromise, student activists are increasingly pushing for confrontation on the very basic grounds of student authority in ~~purely academic decision-making~~ such traditional faculty matters as faculty appointments, admissions, program requirements and degree certification.

This conflict, of course, is as old as the university itself. The University of Bologna was formed in the eleventh century on the student-power model and student power has continued to be an integral part of the Latin university today. In contrast, the University of Paris was founded at about the same time as a faculty association, and both the northern European and North American universities since have been based on faculty power. Student-faculty confrontations have recurred many times over the centuries and many adjustments have resulted. Generally, however, the faculty has retained the upper hand in the north, while the students have held the ultimate power in the south.

Both historically and at the present time, universities based upon faculty power have in general been governed by consensus methods and have been productive in scholarship, while universities in which student influences are strong have been heavily swayed by confrontation tactics and have become highly politicized.

In continental European universities of today, major problems may be traced to a considerable extend to the fact that the faculties of these institutions do not control either the numbers or quality of students admitted to the university, and that these faculties have little or no control over conditions under which students continue in the role of students at the universities. Where this has happened, the universities have generally ceased to be distinguished.

While one should hesitate to draw cause-and-effect conclusions from such a correlation because of associated confounding factors, we have little historical evidence indicating that a highly politicized university community can long continue to be productive in the realm of unbiased scholarship -- or indeed that it can add much to the cumulative wisdom of our culture. As one distinguished professor said over at the University of Paris last spring, I am completely pessimistic about the future of this university although I now have come to believe that our moral culture will survive.

In the north European and American model, the institution is based upon what may be termed the <u>generational concept</u>. The faculty represents the current generation of scholars, charged with training postulants for admittance into the community of scholars. It is the faculty alone who are citizens of that community, and who are therefore enfranchised in it. Under this concept, the faculty as a class of established scholars have the responsibility for exposing aspiring scholars to the accumulated wisdom of our cluture. From this, the student will take what he wants, add to it, modify it, and -- when he in turn becomes a member of the generation of faculty -- will similarly expose the next generation to a revised accumulation of knowledge. The faculty are identified by the fact that they are employed as such, and received professorial rank on the recommendation of their peers. Students are identified by having been so designated by the faculty. They apply to the university for admittance and pay for the privilege of being in it.

In sharp contrast, many students today view the university not as an institution of the state based upon the generational concept, but rather as a city-state itself, -- as a political unit in microcosm. Under the city-state concept, the university is considered to be a self-contained community having all the rights and responsibilities of a political body. As such, it follows that there should be only one class of citizen within the community, and each citizen should

have an equal right in determining the affairs of state. Under the one man -- one vote principle, the students should be the dominant electorate. At the very least, the student population should be recognized as a separate but equal group with the faculty and should share in university government on a bipartite basis. Since the students under this concept are a constituency in themselves, they should be judged only by their peers and they should determine who should be classified as a student and who should be separated from student status. Since they form the majority in any one class, they should determine how the course should be structured, what textbook should be used, and what, if any, evaluation procedure should be followed. Preferably they should run the university. Failing that, they should be a self-governing population in their own right.

These concepts follow naturally if one conceives of the university as a city-state in its own right and if this city-state is governed by the slogans of the civil rights movement, the urban issue, and the black power movement among others.

It is difficult to argue against this line of reason unless one questions the basic concept of the city-state university. When the student activist harangues that students are now at best second-class citizens, the faculty member does not score by retorting that students are not citizens in the university at all, franchisement being reserved for the faculty. When faculty attempt to reach a compromise positions with students on matters of school governance, they may, if they are not careful, compromise the basic principles on which the university is based. Acceptance of the principle of bipartite participation in university governance does in fact establish student citizenship on a separate basis than that of the faculty.

Although such bipartite governance may be temporarily acceptable as a gain for student power, the next generation of students -- and a student population in generations is only one year apart -- will inevitably press for full student participation on the basis of one-class of citizenship opening in a one man--one vote principle.

It is doubtful whether either model is completely acceptable in our place and time. The generational model unmodified by student input has come under increasing attack as the faculty has become increasingly professionalized. On the other hand, the city-state type of institution would be so radically different from the universities we now have that it is doubtful that it would replace the present generational institutions as vehicles for bringing together, assessing, and distilling the accumulated wisdom of the ages and of the present generation of mature intellects.

In working toward a mutually acceptable model for the university of the future, the faculty must keep two issues clearly in mind. First, from a tactical viewpoint, the continued interaction of the faculty consensus approach with the student confrontation approach will inevitably result in continued movement toward the goals of the latter group. The compromises worked out yesterday become the targets for confrontation attacks today. Regretably, confrontation tactics can only be met by confrontation tactics. Mediation that disregards basic principles can only lead to the destruction of the university that we know today. Perhaps this is desirable, but we should at least realize what we are doing.

Second, on basic principles we should not forget that the university exists on franchisement of the community which finances and otherwise supports it. The community at large is formally represented by the university's governing board which delegates to the several faculties the basic responsibility for determining who should be admitted as a student, under what conditions an individual should continue as a student, and when he should be graduated or be otherwise removed from student status. The faculties cannot abrograte their basic responsibility for establishing and enforcing those explicit rules of conduct which they consider relevant to academic programs under their jurisdiction. Direct and formal student involvement is desirable, and due process safeguards are essential. In the last analysis, however, the faculty must determine what standards of behavior are to be required of all in the interest of the continued existence and development of the university.

Perhaps the most promising type of decision-making pattern is that which maintains the faculty near the apex (i.e., under the governing board) of the organization, but in which the faculty in turn establishes committees and boards under it composed of both faculty and students to whom are delegated much of the basic responsibility in academic policy formation. In such a bi-level arrangement, the principle of ultimate faculty responsibility is maintained while both faculty and students join together in the development of academic policy at the working level. There would appear to be no reason for forming all committees with equal number of students and faculty. Rather, the nature of the charge should determine the composition of the committee. Some might well be composed entirely of faculty, others entirely of students, with all combinations in between

being appropriate for various sets of responsibilities. Such committees could report to the faculty of the unit concerned which would forward its recommendations in turn through administration channels as needed. As is usual with the academic decision processes, the original recommendations may be honed and polished with each successive step, but will seldom be reversed. Student activists may initially feel that they are given an inadequate voice in such a system. Students who put their hand to it, however, will find how influential their voice can be when applied intelligently to the academic decision-making system that wants and needs their input.